

DIRECTOR'S SPEECH GIVEN
AT THE
THE BUSINESS COUNCIL
HOT SPRINGS
SATURDAY, 10 MAY 1969

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: I WOULD LIKE TO TALK OVER WITH YOU TONIGHT SOME OF THE INSIGHTS THAT HAVE OCCURRED TO ME AS I VIEW THE PRINCIPAL AREAS OF CONCERN TO THE UNITED STATES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. THE TIME I HAVE GIVES ME TWO CHOICES: I CAN SPREAD MYSELF OVER A NUMBER OF TOPICS/OR COVER ONE THING IN GREATER DETAIL. THE SECOND CHOICE SEEMS PREFERABLE. LET ME THEN GIVE YOU A FEW THOUGHTS ABOUT IMMEDIATE DEVELOPMENTS, AFTER WHICH I WILL DISCUSS IN SOME DETAIL THE CENTRAL PROBLEM OF HOW WE GOT WHERE WE ARE IN VIETNAM.

OF CURRENT PROBLEMS, I SUPPOSE THE FOREMOST IS THE MIDDLE EAST. THERE IS LITTLE CHEERFUL I CAN SAY ABOUT THIS. WE AND THE BRITISH, THE FRENCH, AND THE SOVIETS ARE INTENSIVELY TALKING ABOUT A POSSIBLE GENERAL SETTLEMENT. BUT ON ALL THE BORDERS AROUND ISRAEL, THINGS GET STEADILY WORSE.

ACROSS THE SUEZ CANAL THE EGYPTIANS AND ISRAELIS FACE EACH OTHER FROM HEAVILY FORTIFIED POSITIONS. IT IS LIKE A QUIET SECTOR OF THE WESTERN FRONT IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR--THE ARTILLERY FIRES MOST OF THE TIME, AND PATROLS GO OUT, BUT NEITHER SIDE IS TRYING TO TAKE GROUND--THUS FAR. THE SITUATION IS NO BETTER

FACING JORDAN AND SYRIA. EVEN THE ISRAELI-LEBANESE BORDER, WHERE THE PEACE HAS BEEN PRETTY WELL KEPT SINCE 1948, IS NOW EXTREMELY TOUCHY.

IN A RATIONAL WORLD, THE CLASHING INTERESTS OF ISRAEL AND THE ARAB STATES COULD PROBABLY FIND A COMPROMISE. BUT BOTH SIDES CARRY THE EMOTIONAL WEIGHT OF THIRTY CENTURIES--EMOTION BASED IN HATE, DISTRUST, AND RELIGIOUS FERVOR.

PALESTINE FIRST APPEARED IN HISTORY AS A PROBLEM 3300 YEARS AGO, WHEN THE HEBREWS BEGAN TO MOVE INTO PALESTINE AGAINST THE EGYPTIANS. THE LOCAL SATRAPS APPEALED TO PHARAOH FOR MILITARY HELP AGAINST THESE INVADERS. BUT THE HELP DID NOT COME, AND THE HEBREWS OCCUPIED PALESTINE. ABOUT 600 YEARS LATER, THE ARABS APPEARED OUT OF THE DESERT AND PUSHED INTO ANCIENT BABYLONIA--PRESENT DAY IRAQ. NOTE THEN THAT THE HEBREWS AND THE ARABS ORIGINATED IN THE SAME REGION, AND ARE RELATED BOTH BY RACE AND BY LANGUAGE. BUT THIS DOES NOT ENDEAR THEM TO ONE ANOTHER. IN THE CENTURIES OF STRIFE THAT FOLLOWED, PALESTINE WAS RULED IN TURN BY ONE WARRING PEOPLE AFTER ANOTHER. THE HEBREWS WERE FOLLOWED BY THE ROMANS, THE PERSIANS, THE ARABS, THE CRUSADERS, THE

TURKS, AND FINALLY THE BRITISH. IN THE COURSE OF THESE UPHEAVALS JERUSALEM BECAME A HOLY PLACE FOR THREE OF THE WORLD'S PRINCIPAL RELIGIONS.

THE SEEDS TO THE PRESENT CRISIS WERE PLANTED AS BRITISH POWER REPLACED TURKISH DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR. ON THE ONE HAND THE BRITISH, IN THE BALFOUR DECLARATION, STATED THEIR SUPPORT FOR A JEWISH HOMELAND IN PALESTINE. ON THE OTHER THEY PROMISED HUSAYN, KING OF HEJAZ--THE PRESENT HUSAYN'S GREAT GRANDFATHER--TO HELP THE ARABS EMERGING FROM TURKISH RULE TO ESTABLISH AN INDEPENDENT STATE IN THEIR TRADITIONAL HOMELAND. THE PROBLEM WAS THAT BOTH THE JEWS AND THE ARABS TOOK "HOMELAND" TO MEAN PALESTINE.

THE AMBIGUITY OF THE BRITISH POSITION, WHETHER DELIBERATE OR NOT, BROUGHT INTO FOCUS THE DEEP-SEATED HOPES AND ANTAGONISMS OF CENTURIES. JUDAISM AND ISLAM, ZIONISM AND ARAB NATIONALISM, HAVE CLASHED HEAD-ON, AND NO RATIONAL SETTLEMENT IS IN SIGHT.

WHAT IS WORSE, A NEW PHENOMENON HAS BEEN ADDED IN RECENT MONTHS--THE FEDAYEEN. THE FEDAYEEN ARE ESSENTIALLY TERRORISTS WHO ARE DEDICATED TO THE

DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL. THEY ARE ALSO LARGELY PAL-
ESTINIANS ~~/~~ IN OTHER WORDS ARABS WHOSE HOMELAND IS
ISRAEL ITSELF. THEY ARE SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE ARAB
NATIONS AND CONSIDER THEMSELVES ABOVE THE POWER OF
ANY ONE OF THEM. I CAN BEST EXPLAIN THEIR POWER AND
IMPORTANCE BY ASSERTING THAT TO THE ARAB YOUTH OF
EIGHTEEN, ~~/~~ THE FEDAYEEN REPRESENT THE SAME OUTLET TO
YOUTHFUL FRUSTRATION THAT PROTEST OFFERS TO OUR OWN
SONS IN COLLEGE. FOR THE ARAB, HOWEVER, GUNS AND
HIGH EXPLOSIVES ARE THE APPROVED SOLUTION.

THUS SOMETHING NEW IS LOOSE IN THE MIDDLE EAST,
SOMETHING WHICH THREATENS THE ESTABLISHED ARAB STATES
AS MUCH AS ISRAEL. EVEN IF THESE STATES COULD BE
BROUGHT TO MAKE PEACE, THE FEDAYEEN MIGHT NOT AC-
CEPT. IN FACT, THEY MIGHT WELL SWEEP AWAY THE WHOLE
STRUCTURE OF STATES, AND LEAVE ISRAEL DEFENDING ITS
BORDERS AGAINST UNCONTROLLED SAVAGERY.

A DEPRESSING PICTURE OF A DEPRESSING SUBJECT.
LET ME MOVE ON.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA. ONCE THE SOVIETS DECIDED THE
CZECH EXPERIMENT WAS GOING TOO FAR, IT WAS ONLY A
MATTER OF TIME UNTIL THEY GOT RID OF DUBCEK AND
REALLY CRACKED DOWN. THIS HAS FINALLY HAPPENED, BUT

I STILL HAVE SOME HOPE THAT THE SPARKS WILL NOT DIE. CZECHOSLOVAKIA WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN--AND, WHAT IS MORE, THE SOVIETS CAN NEVER AGAIN COUNT ON THE CZECHS WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN. TODAY THEY CONSTITUTE A WEAK SPOT IN MOSCOW'S MILITARY DEFENSES AGAINST THE WEST.

THIS BRINGS ME TO THE SOVIET UNION ITSELF. AS YOU KNOW, BOTH THE JOHNSON AND NIXON ADMINISTRATIONS HAVE SOUGHT TO FIND SOME GROUND FOR AN EASING OF RELATIONS BETWEEN OURSELVES AND THE SOVIETS. IN PARTICULAR, WE HAVE WANTED TO EXPLORE A LESSENING OF THE ARMS BURDEN FOR BOTH SIDES.

THE PRESENT COST OF MAINTAINING STRATEGIC FORCES STRONG ENOUGH TO DEFEND THIS COUNTRY MAKES THE TAX-PAYER GROAN. THE FUTURE COSTS OF AN ADEQUATE DEFENSE MAY WELL BE INTOLERABLE. WE KNOW THE SOVIET UNION HAS THE SAME PROBLEM, OR WORSE. ITS RESOURCES WILL SIMPLY NOT COVER ITS NEEDS. ITS GENERALS, LIKE OURS, WANT MORE MONEY FOR GUNS. ITS INDUSTRIALISTS KNOW THEY MUST HAVE MORE MONEY FOR INVESTMENT IF THEIR PLANT IS NOT TO DECAY. ITS CONSUMERS HAVE TASTED JUST ENOUGH OF THE AFFLUENT LIFE TO BEGIN INSISTING ON MORE.

WE THINK THERE MAY BE COMMON GROUND HERE, A POSSIBILITY THAT MONEY SPENT ON UNPRODUCTIVE ARMS MIGHT MUTUALLY BE REDIRECTED TO THE PRESSING NEEDS OF SOCIETY. BUT ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEMS IS THAT WE ARE DEALING WITH A SOVIET UNION THAT SEEMS UNCLEAR IN ITS OWN MIND.

ITS LEADERSHIP IS DIVIDED BETWEEN AGING PARTY APPARATCHIKS WHO BELIEVE THEIR OWN DOGMA AND YOUNGER MEN WHO HAVE SOME SENSE THAT THIS DOGMA HAS BECOME IRRELEVANT. THE OLDER MEN AT LEAST FIND IT HARD TO ACCEPT THE IDEA THAT A MUTUALITY OF INTERESTS WITH THE ARCH-CAPITALIST STATE IS EVEN CONCEIVABLE.

AND THESE MEN HAVE OTHER PROBLEMS DISTRACTING THEM FROM FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES. THEY CARRY A LOT OF SUPERFLUOUS IDEOLOGICAL BAGGAGE WITH THEM--THE NOTION, FOR INSTANCE, THAT THE SOVIET COMMUNIST PARTY IS THE RIGHTFUL LEADER OF ALL COMMUNIST PARTIES EVERYWHERE. THIS IDEA IS CLEARLY DEAD--CZECHOSLOVAKIA WAS THE FINAL EVIDENCE OF MORAL BANKRUPTCY. FURTHER, SOVIET LEADERS ARE INFURIATED, AND AT THE SAME TIME BAFFLED, BY THE CHINESE CHALLENGE. THEY SIMPLY DO NOT UNDERSTAND HOW THE COMMUNIST PARTIES OF WESTERN EUROPE CAN DRIFT SO FAR TOWARD BOURGEOIS

VALUES. IN SHORT, THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP TODAY IS LIKE A STRONG BULL BESET BY A PACK OF DOGS. FOR A LONG TIME IT IS BEWILDERED--FROZEN IN PLACE--BUT WHEN IT REACTS, IT OVERREACTS. IT CHARGES BUT MISSES THE TARGET AND THE DOGS ARE NIPPING AT ITS FLANKS AGAIN. I DO NOT MEAN TO CARRY THIS SIMILE TOO FAR--FOR US THIS BULL IS A FORMIDABLE ADVERSARY AND A CLEVER ONE.

I SEE LITTLE CHANCE THAT SOVIET POLICY WILL BECOME MORE FORTHCOMING TOWARD THE WEST UNTIL THE TENSIONS IN THE LEADERSHIP ARE RESOLVED, UNTIL MOSCOW REGAINS A CONSISTENT POLICY AND A SURE TOUCH, UNTIL IT DECIDES WHETHER ITS INTERESTS LIE IN THE PAST OR IN THE PRESENT. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT LIMITED AGREEMENTS CANNOT BE NEGOTIATED WITH THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP. BUT IT IS TO SAY THAT THEY CONTINUE CAUTIOUS, SUSPICIOUS, DEFENSIVE. WHEN CAN WE EXPECT A RESOLUTION OF THESE FACTORS? SOME KREMLINOLOGISTS THINK THAT BREZHNEV WILL BE GONE WITHIN A YEAR. BUT I WOULD CAUTION THAT KREMLINOLOGY IS NOT AN EXACT SCIENCE, AND POLITICAL EVENTS IN THE SOVIET UNION SOMETIMES MOVE VERY SLOWLY. KHRUSHCHEV WAS FIRED FOR THE CUBAN MISSILE VENTURE, BUT IT TOOK TWO WHOLE YEARS.

NOW LET ME TURN TO VIETNAM, A PROBLEM WHICH PREOCCUPIES US ALL. IT WOULD NOT BE APPROPRIATE FOR ME TO DISCUSS POLICY. I CANNOT MAKE EASIER FOR ANY OF US THE LOSSES IN HUMAN TREASURE WHICH HAVE SADDENED SO MANY AMERICAN FAMILIES. I WOULD LIKE, HOWEVER, TO GIVE YOU THE HISTORY OF THIS CONFLICT, AND TO GIVE IT TO YOU THROUGH THE EYES OF THE ENEMY--AS RECONSTRUCTED FROM HUNDREDS OF PIECES OF EVIDENCE.

THIS IS A DIFFICULT SUBJECT, ONE WHICH I APPROACH WITH HUMILITY. PERHAPS I AM IMPOSING ON YOU AFTER SUCH A GOOD DINNER. BUT--SERIOUS SUBJECTS DESERVE SERIOUS TREATMENT, AND I KNOW NO GROUP OF PRIVATE CITIZENS WHO ARE MORE DEDICATED TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROBLEMS THE COUNTRY FACES THAN THE MEMBERS OF THE BUSINESS COUNCIL. I SPEAK WITH NO OFFICIAL VOICE, BUT I DO KNOW WHEREOF I SPEAK.

AS WE SEE IT, OUR ADVERSARIES HAVE MADE FOUR CRUCIAL DECISIONS OVER THE PAST FIFTEEN YEARS:

--IN 1954, THEY ACCEPTED THE GENEVA SETTLEMENT.

--IN 1956, THEY REVERSED COURSE AND RESUMED THE WAR IN THE SOUTHERN HALF OF VIETNAM.

--IN 1963, THEY RADICALLY CHANGED THE SCALE AND CHARACTERS OF THAT WAR BY THROWING IN NORTHERN TROOPS.

--FINALLY, IN 1967, THEY MADE AN ALL-OUT TRY FOR POLITICAL VICTORY.

THE FAILURE OF THAT TRY BRINGS US TO TODAY'S COMPLICATED INTERPLAY BETWEEN THE BATTLEFIELD AND PARIS--AMONG THE GOVERNMENTS IN SAIGON, WASHINGTON, AND HANOI.

I WILL DISCUSS THE RATIONALE FOR EACH OF THESE FOUR DECISIONS, BUT FIRST A BIT OF BACKGROUND.

THE VIETNAMESE ARE SHAPED BY TRADITIONS RADICALLY DIFFERENT FROM OURS. THEY HAVE EXISTED OVER TWO THOUSAND YEARS OF RECORDED HISTORY AS AN IDENTIFIABLY SEPARATE PEOPLE. THEY HAVE A FIERCE SENSE OF ETHNIC PRIDE. BUT THEY DO NOT CONSTITUTE--AT LEAST IN SOUTH VIETNAM--A POLITICAL SOCIETY AS WE UNDERSTAND THAT TERM. THEIR PRESENT POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS HAVE NO SUPPORTING HISTORICAL OR TRADITIONAL ROOTS. THE TERRITORY THAT COMPRISES MODERN VIETNAM--NORTH AND SOUTH--DID NOT COME UNDER SINGLE VIETNAMESE RULE UNTIL 1802. THAT UNIFIED VIETNAMESE RULE ONLY LASTED FOR SIXTY YEARS AND THEN WAS DESTROYED BY NEARLY A CENTURY OF FRENCH COLONIAL DOMINATION.

GIVEN THIS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, IT WAS INEVITABLE THAT THE END OF FRENCH RULE IN VIETNAM WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY A PERIOD OF POLITICAL TURMOIL. TURMOIL DID INDEED FOLLOW, AND TOOK A MOST UNATTRACTIVE SHAPE. FOR THE PRESENT STRUGGLE IN VIETNAM IS ROOTED IN THE POLITICAL AMBITIONS OF THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST PARTY. ABOVE ALL, IT IS ROOTED IN THE AMBITIONS OF THE MAN WHO FOUNDED THAT PARTY IN 1930, AND HAS CONTROLLED IT EVER SINCE--A SEVENTY-NINE YEAR OLD MAN WHO TOOK THE NAME OF HO CHI MINH.

"UNCLE HO," ONE OF THE 20TH CENTURY'S MOST REMARKABLE POLITICAL FIGURES, HAS BEEN A PROFESSIONAL COMMUNIST REVOLUTIONARY FOR ALMOST FIFTY YEARS. THE SON OF A MINOR MANDARIN, HE LEFT VIETNAM IN 1911, AT THE AGE OF 21, AS A GALLEY BOY ON A FRENCH MERCHANT VESSEL. AFTER WORLD TRAVELS AND VARIOUS ODD JOBS--HE WAS ONCE ESCOFFIER'S PASTRY COOK IN LONDON'S CARLETON HOTEL--HE WOUND UP IN PARIS.

IN 1920, HE WAS A FOUNDING CHARTER MEMBER OF THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY. NOT LONG THEREAFTER HE WENT TO MOSCOW FOR TRAINING AND INDOCTRINATION. HE NEXT TURNED UP IN CANTON IN 1925 AS INTERPRETER

FOR THE NOTORIOUS MICHAEL BORODIN, THE COMINTERN'S CHIEF AGENT IN CHINA. FOR THE NEXT TWO DECADES, HE WAS IN CHARGE OF THE COMINTERN'S ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. IT WAS IN THIS ROLE THAT HO LAID THE FOUNDATIONS FOR HIS FORMAL CREATION OF THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST PARTY IN JANUARY 1930.

HO'S METHODS DURING THESE EARLY YEARS SET A PATTERN HIS ASSOCIATES HAVE FOLLOWED EVER SINCE: / THEY HAVE LONG LABORED FOR AN INDEPENDENT VIETNAM, BUT ONLY FOR A VIETNAM UNDER COMPLETE COMMUNIST CONTROL. THEY HAVE ALWAYS TRIED TO SAIL UNDER THE FLAG OF NATIONALISM, BUT IN FACT THEY HAVE ALWAYS WAGED NO-QUARTER WARFARE AGAINST ALL VIETNAMESE NATIONALISTS NOT WILLING TO ACCEPT COMMUNIST DOMINATION.

HO HAS BEEN UTTERLY COLD-BLOODED IN THIS QUEST. HE IS NOT THE KINDLY OLD MAN SOME WOULD HAVE YOU BELIEVE. LET ME CITE AN EPISODE. ONE OF THE PATRON SAINTS OF THIS MODERN VIETNAMESE NATIONALISM WAS A SCHOLAR AND ARDENT PATRIOT NAMED PHAN BOI CHAU, /WHO BETWEEN 1905 AND 1925 CREATED THE FIRST SOLID ANTI-FRENCH NATIONALIST MOVEMENT. BY THE TIME HO CAME ON THE SCENE, CHAU WAS ALREADY A LEGENDARY FIGURE AMONG THE VIETNAMESE. HO ARRANGED A RENDEZVOUS WITH THIS MAN IN SHANGHAI TO DISCUSS THEIR DIFFERENCES.

HO FAILED TO MAKE THE MEETING, BUT CHOSE THE ADDRESS, JUST INSIDE THE FRENCH CONCESSION. THE FRENCH POLICE, CAREFULLY TIPPED OFF, WERE WAITING. AND CHAU SPENT THE REST OF HIS LIFE IN FRENCH JAILS.

IN THIS FASHION HO DISPOSED OF A RIVAL WHOSE NAME HE CONTINUED TO EXPLOIT, POCKETED THE FRENCH REWARD OF 100,000 PIASTERS, AND THEREBY REPLENISHED THE FUNDS OF HIS ORGANIZATION. THIS KIND OF TRICK HE PULLED AGAIN AND AGAIN WITH OTHER RIVALS.

DURING WORLD WAR II, HO OBTAINED CONTROL OVER A CHINESE-SPONSORED VIETNAMESE POLITICAL MOVEMENT KNOWN AS THE VIET MINH. IN THE CHAOTIC AFTERMATH OF JAPAN'S SURRENDER, HO'S VIET MINH SEIZED POWER IN HANOI AND PROCLAIMED ITSELF THE RULER OF THE "DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM"--THE "DRV," AS IT IS STILL KNOWN. WHEN THIS CLAIM WAS CONTESTED BY THE RETURNING FRENCH, HO NEGOTIATED AND STALLED FOR JUST OVER A YEAR WHILE HE READIED HIS FOLLOWERS FOR WAR.

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR US TO UNDERSTAND JUST WHAT THE VIET MINH WAS. OSTENSIBLY A NATIONALIST MOVEMENT, IT WAS ACTUALLY UNDER TOTAL CONTROL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY. IT PLAYED THE SAME ROLE AGAINST THE

FRENCH THAT THE VIET CONG AND THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT PLAY TODAY. THEY TOO PRETEND TO "NATIONALISM" BUT ARE IN FACT THE PARTY OR CREATURES THEREOF.

THE FRANCO-VIET MINH WAR BROKE OUT IN DECEMBER 1946. IT LASTED FOR SEVEN AND A HALF YEARS AND, AS YOU ALL KNOW, ENDED AT THE GENEVA CONFERENCE OF 1954. ONE OF ITS RESULTS WAS THE LEGALIZATION OF THE DRV AS A COMMUNIST STATE RULING THAT PORTION OF VIETNAM THAT LIES NORTH OF THE 17TH PARALLEL. ANOTHER WAS THE STRUGGLE BEING WAGED IN SOUTH VIETNAM TODAY.

TO US, IT HAS ALWAYS SEEMED OBVIOUS THAT THE GENEVA ACCORDS, /PRESIDED OVER BY THE BRITISH AND THE RUSSIANS, /SOLEMNIZED A VIET MINH VICTORY. BUT WITHIN TWO YEARS AFTER 1954, HO AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAD COME TO LOOK ON THIS AS A BETRAYAL. THE RUSSIANS, /AND TO A LESSER EXTENT THE CHINESE, /HAD SOLD THEM A BILL OF GOODS. THIS SENSE OF BETRAYAL HAS RANKLED RELATIONS BETWEEN HANOI AND ITS COMMUNIST ALLIES EVER SINCE. IN FACT, ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL AFTERMATH IS ONE OF THE GREATEST OBSTACLES TO PEACE TODAY, AND IS THUS WORTH DWELLING ON.

AT GENEVA, THE PARTY ACCEPTED WHAT IT REGARDED AS A TEMPORARY OR INTERIM SETTLEMENT THAT INITIALLY GAVE IT CONTROL OVER ONLY HALF OF THE COUNTRY. THE

GENEVA ACCORDS SPEAK OF VIETNAM AS A SINGLE POLITICAL ENTITY. THEY DO NOT ALWAYS SPEAK CLEARLY, HOWEVER, AND THE 1954 CONFERENCE WAS ACTUALLY ATTENDED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF TWO NASCENT VIETNAMESE STATES. THE ACCORDS LEFT BOTH AT LEAST TEMPORARILY IN BEING. ONE WAS HO'S DRV. THE OTHER WAS FRENCH-DOMINATED VIETNAM, AN "ASSOCIATED STATE" WITHIN THE FRENCH UNION, UNDER THE PUPPET EMPEROR BAO DAI. / ON THE OTHER HAND, IN A VAGUE, AMBIGUOUSLY WORDED (AND UNSIGNED) "FINAL DECLARATION," THE GENEVA SETTLEMENT DID STATE THAT THE MILITARY DEMARCATION LINE AT THE 17TH PARALLEL WAS NOT TO BE INTERPRETED AS A POLITICAL OR TERRITORIAL BOUNDARY / AND THAT "GENERAL ELECTIONS" IN SOME UNSPECIFIED FORM WERE TO BE HELD IN JULY 1956.

IN ACCEPTING THE GENEVA SETTLEMENT, HO AND HIS COMMUNIST COLLEAGUES WERE GAMBLING. AT THE TIME IT APPEARED TO THEM--AND THE REST OF THE WORLD--THAT THEY WERE GAMBLING ON A SURE THING. PARTITION AT THE 17TH PARALLEL PUT THE MAJORITY OF THE VIETNAMESE POPULATION IN THE NORTHERN--OR COMMUNIST--ZONE. THE COMMUNISTS HAD EVERY REASON TO ANTICIPATE THAT, / WITH TWO YEARS IN WHICH TO ORGANIZE THE POPULATION CONSIGNED TO THEIR CONTROL, / THEY COULD DELIVER

99 PLUS PERCENT OF THE NORTHERN VOTE IN ANY ELECTION. HENCE THEY WERE CERTAIN TO WIN, NO MATTER HOW THE SOUTHERN MINORITY MIGHT VOTE. FURTHERMORE, THE POLITBURO HAD EVERY REASON TO BELIEVE--IN 1954--THAT AN ELECTION IN 1956 WAS ONLY ONE OF THE EASY AVENUES TO POWER. AT THE TIME OF GENEVA, THE NON-COMMUNIST SOUTHERN ZONE WAS CLOSE TO POLITICAL CHAOS. EVERY ANALYSIS SHOWED THAT THE MAKESHIFT GOVERNMENT IN THE SOUTH WOULD SOON UNRAVEL. A SITUATION WOULD ENSUE IN WHICH THE COMMUNISTS WERE THE ONLY EFFECTIVE, ORGANIZED POLITICAL GROUP AND, HENCE, COULD EASILY TAKE POWER.

THE ACTUAL COURSE OF EVENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM AFTER GENEVA CONFOUNDED ALL THE PROPHETS, INCLUDING THOSE WHO SAT IN THE POLITBURO IN HANOI. THEY HAD NOT COUNTED ON THE TOUGHNESS OF NGO DINH DIEM. DURING THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, DIEM BECAME BAO DAI'S PREMIER. HE HAD UNCHALLENGEABLE CREDENTIALS AS A VIETNAMESE PATRIOT. AS YOU KNOW, HE THREW OUT ALL REMNANTS OF FRENCH CONTROL OVER SOUTH VIETNAM AND DISSOLVED HIS GOVERNMENT'S TIE WITH THE FRENCH UNION. DIEM IN FACT CREATED A REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, RECOGNIZED IN INTERNATIONAL LAW BY 89 OTHER NATIONS. THIS REPUBLIC WAS AS VALIDLY INDEPENDENT AS HO'S RIVAL REGIME IN HANOI, AND DIEM BECAME ITS PRESIDENT.

WHATEVER ONE'S JUDGMENTS ON THE COMPLEX TRAGEDY PLAYED OUT DURING DIEM'S FINAL DAYS, HIS EARLY YEARS IN OFFICE WERE SOMETHING BORDERING ON THE MIRACULOUS. HE PROVIDED THE LEADERSHIP TO REVERSE TRENDS WHICH HAD SEEMED IRREVERSIBLE AT THE TIME OF GENEVA. SOUTH VIETNAM DID NOT COLLAPSE. IT BEGAN TO MAKE PROGRESS IN MANY POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL FIELDS.

I DO NOT MEAN TO SUGGEST FOR A MINUTE THAT SOUTH VIETNAM EVER RESEMBLED OR IS EVER LIKELY TO RESEMBLE A JEFFERSONIAN UTOPIA. DIEM WAS A FALLIBLE HUMAN BEING WITH A MYSTICAL CONVICTION IN THE RIGHTNESS OF HIS JUDGMENT, A CONVICTION THAT GREW STRONGER-- AND POLITICALLY MORE DAMAGING--AS THE YEARS WORE ON. EVEN AT ITS HEYDAY, 1957-1958, DIEM'S GOVERNMENT HAD OBVIOUS FLAWS. ITS OPERATIONS WERE OFTEN CLUMSY, AND CREATED LEGITIMATE GRIEVANCES AMONG VARIOUS SEGMENTS OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE POPULATION. BUT AFTER WE ACKNOWLEDGE ALL THE WEAKNESSES OF DIEM'S FLEDGING GOVERNMENT, THE FACT REMAINS THAT IN ITS EARLY YEARS IT STEADILY GAINED IN STRENGTH.

THIS BROUGHT INTO FOCUS THE AMBIGUITIES OF THE 1954 GENEVA ACCORDS. MOST OF THE PARTICIPANTS IN THAT CONFERENCE HAD BEEN CONVINCED THAT HO'S RULE

OVER ALL OF VIETNAM WAS VIRTUALLY FOREORDAINED. HENCE, THERE WAS LITTLE POINT IN DELAYING A CEASE-FIRE TO SETTLE DETAILS UNLIKELY TO HAVE ANY PRACTICAL RELEVANCE. BUT BY 1956, DIEM REJECTED THE GENEVA ACCORDS FOR THE SAME REASON THAT HO HAD ACCEPTED THEM: THE STACKED DECK EFFECTIVELY PRECLUDED A TRULY FREE ELECTION.

THIS BRINGS US TO THE SECOND "BREAK-POINT" IN VIETNAM'S RECENT HISTORY. IN THE SUMMER OF 1956, HO AND HIS POLITBURO HAD TO REVIEW THE BIDDING. DIEM'S SUCCESS IN IGNORING THE GENEVA ELECTION DEADLINE ALMOST CERTAINLY PROVIDED THE OCCASION. THEY HAD TO ACKNOWLEDGE, AT LEAST TO THEMSELVES, THAT DIEM'S GOVERNMENT WAS NOT LIKELY TO COLLAPSE. IN FACT, ITS PROSPECTS WERE INCREASINGLY BRIGHT.

THEY THOUGHT MOSCOW AND PEKING HAD PROMISED THEM POLITICAL CONTROL OVER ALL OF VIETNAM. THAT PROSPECT HAD NOW BEEN SNATCHED AWAY. SO THEY DELIBERATELY RETURNED TO TERRORISM AND GUERRILLA WARFARE--TWELVE MORE YEARS OF JUNGLE FIGHTING--NORTH AND SOUTH DEVASTATED--A GENERATION OF YOUNG MEN BLOTTED OUT. THIS WAS THE PRICE OF THE "BETRAYAL" AT GENEVA. INDEED, HO HAS RUTHLESSLY MADE IT AN EXPENSIVE ONE, AND ESPECIALLY FOR HIS OWN PEOPLE. THEY ARE STILL PAYING, AND WILL PAY MORE YET, BECAUSE GENEVA TAUGHT HO TO DISTRUST ALL NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENTS--A FACT THAT CONTINUES TO HAUNT US IN PARIS TODAY.

AS, THE PARTY BEGAN MAKING PREPARATIONS TO RESUME THE ARMED STRUGGLE, THERE WAS CREATED AN OFFICE IN HANOI CALLED THE "CENTRAL REUNIFICATION DEPARTMENT." THE REUNIFICATION DEPARTMENT WAS GIVEN ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL OVER THE 90,000-ODD SOUTHERN VIET MINH VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES WHO HAD COME NORTH IN 1954 UNDER THE "REGROUPEMENT" PROVISIONS OF THE GENEVA ACCORDS. THESE "REGROUPEES" CONSTITUTED A RESOURCE POOL THAT FIGURED PROMINENTLY IN THE POLITBURO'S DEVELOPING PLANS.

IN EARLY 1957, WHAT HAS BEEN CALLED "THE SECOND INDOCHINA WAR" BEGAN. IN ADDITION TO THE "REGROUPEES" OVERTLY TAKEN NORTH IN 1954, THE PARTY HAD LEFT BEHIND IN SOUTH VIETNAM A COVERT APPARATUS WHOSE CONTINUED PRESENCE THERE WAS A CLEAR VIOLATION OF THE GENEVA AGREEMENTS. THIS APPARATUS WAS UNLEASHED IN A CAMPAIGN OF ASSASSINATION, TERRORISM AND SUBVERSION DESIGNED TO CHECK THE POLITICAL PROGRESS OF DIEM'S GOVERNMENT AND BREAK ITS POINTS OF CONTACT WITH THE RURAL POPULATION.

BY THE EARLY SUMMER OF 1959 THE STRUGGLE HAD BECOME A "WAR OF NATIONAL LIBERATION." COMMUNIST MILITARY ACTIVITY IN THE SOUTH BEGAN TO RISE RAPIDLY. NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY OPERATIONS IN LAOS ESTABLISHED COMMUNIST CONTROL OVER LAOTIAN TERRITORY ADJACENT TO THE VIETNAMESE BORDER. WORK WAS BEGUN ON DEVELOPING THE LOGISTIC SUPPORT NETWORK THROUGH LAOS KNOWN AS THE "HO CHI MINH TRAIL." SOUTHERN VIET MINH VETERANS, OR THEIR CHILDREN, WERE SELECTED FROM THE REGROUPEE POOL, AND DISPATCHED TO THE SOUTH IN AN EVER-INCREASING STREAM. THESE "RETURNEES"--ALL ETHNIC SOUTHERNERS--WERE TO PROVIDE THE ORGANIZERS, TECHNICIANS AND DISCIPLINED LEADERS WHO WOULD BUILD THE INSURGENT MOVEMENT. THEY BECAME THE VIET CONG, WHICH TRANSLATES LITERALLY INTO ENGLISH AS "VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS."

AT THE TIME OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S ELECTION, HANOI HAD DISPATCHED AT LEAST 4,600 OF THESE RETURNEES TO SOUTH VIETNAM. WHEN PRESIDENT JOHNSON TOOK OFFICE THREE YEARS LATER, THE FIGURE HAD RISEN TO AT LEAST 31,700. THE TOTAL NOW, INCLUDING THE NATIVE NORTHERNERS IN REGULAR COMBAT UNITS, IS ALMOST 600,000. MOST OF THEM ARE DEAD.

AS A POLITICAL COVER FOR ITS RAPIDLY EXPANDING INSURGENCY, HANOI ANNOUNCED IN LATE 1960 THE CREATION OF A "NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT" IN SOUTH VIETNAM. THIS WAS AN ALLEGEDLY SPONTANEOUS COALESCENCE OF SOUTHERN POLITICAL GROUPS OPPOSED TO THE DIEM GOVERNMENT. THE PARTY INSISTS THAT THE NLF IS AN INDEPENDENT POLITICAL BODY, SYMPATHETICALLY SUPPORTED BY THE DRV, BUT POSSESSED OF A SEPARATE WILL AND EXISTENCE. OF LATE, AND PARTICULARLY SINCE NEGOTIATIONS BEGAN IN PARIS, HANOI HAS TRIED TO SUGGEST THAT THERE IS AN "NLF POSITION" ON IMPORTANT VIETNAMESE ISSUES, SEPARATE AND DIFFERENT FROM THE DRV POSITION. / THIS IS HOGWASH. / AS I NOTED EARLIER, THE FRONT IS JUST THAT--A FRONT FOR THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN HANOI. NOTE FOR INSTANCE THAT THE FRONT'S CHIEF NEGOTIATOR IN PARIS IS A LONG TIME COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBER.

AFTER DIEM WAS OVERTHROWN IN 1963 HO AND COMPANY MADE THEIR THIRD FUNDAMENTAL DECISION. THEY WOULD MOVE FOR A QUICK VICTORY BY THROWING IN ADDITIONAL RESOURCES. THE REGROUPEES WERE NOT SUFFICIENT. THEY WERE TO BE REINFORCED, IN FACT SWALLOWED UP IN A STREAM OF NORTHERNERS SENT SOUTH TO FIGHT. BY STRIKING INTENSIVELY, HO BELIEVED HE COULD ERADICATE HIS NON-COMMUNIST OPPONENTS IN THE SOUTH BEFORE THEY SORTED OUT THEIR OWN POLITICAL PROBLEMS. HE ALSO RECOGNIZED THAT IF HE DID NOT STRIKE WHILE THE MOMENT WAS OPPORTUNE, HE RAN THE RISK OF FACING A SAIGON GOVERNMENT POSSESSED OF DIEM'S EARLY STRENGTHS, WITHOUT HIS REGIME'S LATER WEAKNESSES, AND WITH INCREASINGLY EFFECTIVE AMERICAN MILITARY SUPPORT.

THUS AFTER DECEMBER 1963 THE SOUTHWARD FLOW OF INFILTRATORS BEGAN TO CHANGE. THE VOLUME WAS GREATLY INCREASED AND NORTH VIETNAMESE BEGAN TO SHOW UP. THEY CAME NOT ONLY AS LEADERS AND TECHNICIANS BUT ALSO AS COMBAT REPLACEMENTS FOR VIET CONG LINE UNITS. MOREOVER, BY THE SUMMER OF 1964, LINE UNITS OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY ITSELF WERE BEING READIED FOR DISPATCH TO THE SOUTH. BY THE FALL THE FIRST OF THESE UNITS WERE MOVING THROUGH LAOS. BY THE BEGINNING OF 1965, THEY BEGAN APPEARING ON SOUTH VIETNAM'S BATTLEFIELDS.

THIS STRATEGY CAME WITHIN A WHISKER OF SUCCESS. BY THE SPRING OF 1965, THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARMY WAS BEING WHIPSAWED, WHILE THE GOVERNMENT IN SAIGON WAS SUBJECTED TO A SERIES OF MILITARY COUPS AND COUNTERCOUPS. HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE COMMITMENT OF US COMBAT TROOPS, THE VC FLAG WOULD PROBABLY HAVE BEEN FLYING OVER MUCH OF SOUTH VIETNAM BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR.

WITH OUR INTERVENTION, THE WAR ENTERED A NEW STAGE THAT LASTED THROUGH THE SUMMER OF 1967. MILITARILY THE SITUATION STABILIZED. NEITHER SIDE SECURED A CLEAR CUT ADVANTAGE, BUT A COMMUNIST VICTORY WAS PREVENTED AND ALLIED FORCES BROKE THE COMMUNISTS' MONOPOLY OF THE STRATEGIC INITIATIVE. POLITICALLY THE PICTURE WAS ALSO MIXED, BUT THE TREND OF THESE TWO YEARS RAN IN SAIGON'S FAVOR. THE GOVERNMENT WHICH CAME TO POWER AS A MILITARY JUNTA IN MAY 1965 PROVIDED, FOR ALL ITS FAULTS, MORE EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP THAN SOUTH VIETNAM HAD SEEN SINCE DIEM'S OVERTHROW. IT WROTE A CONSTITUTION AND SET IN MOTION AN ELECTORAL PROCESS. THESE CAN MAKE NO CLAIM TO PERFECTION BUT THEY HAVE TRANSFORMED THE JUNTA INTO A GOVERNMENT WITH A STRONG CLAIM TO CONSTITUTIONAL LEGITIMACY AND ELECTORAL MANDATE.

THE LOSS OF MOMENTUM WAS MOST DISTURBING TO HANOI. IN THE SUMMER OF 1967, THE LEADERSHIP ADOPTED A FOURTH SET OF STRATEGIC DECISIONS, A STRATEGY WHICH IS STILL GUIDING THEIR ACTIONS TODAY. THIS STRATEGY WAS DESIGNED TO REVERSE THE MILITARY AND POLITICAL TRENDS THAT HANOI FOUND DISQUIETING. SIMULTANEOUSLY IT WAS DESIGNED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF WHAT HANOI REGARDS AS ONE OF ITS PRINCIPAL ASSETS--THE RISING LEVEL OF OPPOSITION TO THE WAR THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AND, PARTICULARLY, IN THE UNITED STATES.

IN ESSENCE, THE COMMUNISTS MOUNTED A MASSIVE MILITARY, POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC EFFORT TO TIP THE SCALES OF STRUGGLE IRREVOCABLY IN THEIR FAVOR DURING 1968 AND 1969. SOME 300,000 NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS WERE DISPATCHED TO SOUTH VIETNAM BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 1967 AND SEPTEMBER 1968--MORE THAN THE ENTIRE MANPOWER INPUT OF ALL PREVIOUS YEARS. MILITARILY, THE KEYSTONE OF THE PLAN WAS THE 1968 TET OFFENSIVE. POLITICALLY AND DIPLOMATICALLY, THE MAJOR NEW INGREDIENT WAS TO BE THE OPENING OF NEGOTIATIONS. THE REASON HANOI REPLIED WITH SUCH ALACRITY TO PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S FAMOUS SPEECH IN MARCH OF LAST YEAR IS THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD, IN EFFECT,

PRE-EMPTED HANOI IN A MOVE THE POLITBURO HAD ALREADY DECIDED TO MAKE AT A TIME OF ITS OWN CHOOSING.

THESE MORE RECENT EVENTS ARE FAMILIAR AND I WILL NOT TAKE THE TIME TO DISCUSS THEM IN DETAIL. HANOI'S NEW STRATEGY HAS MATERIALLY ALTERED THE STRUGGLE. THE GREAT TET OFFENSIVE OF 1968 HAS HAD A MAJOR IMPACT IN VIETNAM AND, AS HANOI HAD FORESEEN, ABROAD. THE FACT OF ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS HAS SET NEW FORCES IN TRAIN THAT ARE DIFFICULT TO ASSESS. THE CURRENT ROUND OF COMMUNIST ACTIVITY THAT BEGAN IN THE EARLY HOURS OF 23 FEBRUARY, THOUGH NOISY AT TIMES, HAS SO FAR BEEN INEFFECTUAL. CAPTURED DOCUMENTS, PRISONER INTERROGATIONS, AND OTHER SOURCES SUGGEST THAT THE COMMUNISTS HAVE ABANDONED EVEN THE HOPE OF MILITARY VICTORY. THEY ARE HAVING INCREASING PROBLEMS WITH MORALE, DISCOURAGEMENT, AND DESERTION. THEREFORE, THEY HAVE SCALED DOWN THEIR MILITARY OBJECTIVES TO MORE MODEST GOALS--KEEPING THE US CASUALTY RATE HIGH, DEMONSTRATING THEIR CONTINUED ABILITY TO TERRORIZE, AND PREVENTING ANY REST FOR THE WEARY SOUTH VIETNAMESE.

HO AND HIS COLLEAGUES ARE INTERESTED IN SEEING IF A SOLUTION TO THE WAR CAN BE NEGOTIATED, BUT THEY ALSO SEE THE NEGOTIATIONS AS A WAY OF EXPLOITING TENSIONS BETWEEN THE US AND SOUTH VIETNAM--

AND OF GENERATING PRESSURE ON THE ADMINISTRATION HERE AT HOME. FURTHERMORE, HANOI MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THIEU'S GOVERNMENT IN 1969 IS STRONGER IN EVERY RESPECT THAN WAS DIEM'S IN 1954. HAVING GAMBLLED ONCE ON A PARTIAL SETTLEMENT AND LOST, HANOI IS RELUCTANT TO GAMBLE AGAIN WHEN THE ODDS ARE CLEARLY WORSE.

AT THE MOMENT HANOI SEEMS LOCKED IN TO A POLICY OF MORE OF THE SAME: PRESSURE ON THE BATTLEFIELD, POLITICAL AGITATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM, STONEWALLING AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE. THIS POLICY RESTS ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE END IS REASONABLY NEAR. THAT IS, HANOI HOPES THAT IF IT WAITS PATIENTLY BUT A FEW MONTHS LONGER, DOMESTIC PRESSURES IN THE US WILL FORCE OUR GOVERNMENT TO MAKE MAJOR CONCESSIONS.

WILL THESE ASSUMPTIONS HOLD UP OR WILL HO HAVE TO MAKE A FIFTH MAJOR DECISION--TO SETTLE FOR A GREAT DEAL LESS THAN THE CONTROL OF THE SOUTH WHICH HE SET OUT TO GAIN? I WISH I COULD CARRY THIS HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT INTO THE FUTURE AND ANSWER THIS QUESTION, SO IMPORTANT TO ALL OF US. BUT SUCH A PREDICTION, ESPECIALLY WITH AN ENEMY AS IMPLACABLE AS THIS ONE, WOULD BE AN EXTREMELY CHANCY THING.

THE ANSWER DEPENDS TO SOME DEGREE ON WHAT HAPPENS HERE IN THE UNITED STATES. BUT IN ADDITION I WANT TO POINT OUT A LITTLE UNDERSTOOD PHENOMENON IN DEALING WITH COMMUNISTS: WE DO NOT KNOW TO THIS DAY EXACTLY WHY THE COMMUNIST GUERRILLAS SUDDENLY STOPPED FIGHTING IN GREECE WHEN THEY DID, OR WHY THE RUSSIANS CALLED OFF THE BERLIN BLOCKADE JUST WHEN THEY DID, OR WHY THE CHINESE AND NORTH KOREANS AGREED TO A SETTLEMENT IN THE KOREAN WAR AT THE PRECISE MOMENT THEY DID.

I HAVE TRIED TO SHARE WITH YOU HOW WE GOT WHERE WE ARE IN VIETNAM. THE REST OF THE STORY WE WILL BE OBLIGED TO READ TOGETHER.